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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA  
ROANOKE DIVISION

KELSEY FRANCIS BURTON, JR., ) Civil Action No. 7:13-cv-00028  
Plaintiff, )  
 )  
v. )  
 )  
GERALD A. MCPEAK, et al., ) MEMORANDUM OPINION  
Defendants. ) By: Hon. Michael F. Urbanski  
 ) United States District Judge

Kelsey Francis Burton, a Virginia inmate who is proceeding pro se, filed a civil rights Complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 with jurisdiction vested in 28 U.S.C. § 1333. Plaintiff names as defendants the New River Valley Regional Jail (“Jail”) and Gerald A. McPeak, the Jail’s Superintendent. Plaintiff alleges that his civil rights were violated by the Jail’s policy to prohibit inmates from possessing dental floss. This action is before the court for screening, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. After reviewing plaintiff’s submissions, the court dismisses the Complaint without prejudice for failing to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

The court must dismiss any action or claim filed by an inmate if the court determines that the action or claim is frivolous or fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted. See 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2), 1915A(b)(1); 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c). The first standard includes claims based upon “an indisputably meritless legal theory,” “claims of infringement of a legal interest which clearly does not exist,” or claims where the “factual contentions are clearly baseless.” Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989). The second standard is the familiar standard for a motion to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), accepting a plaintiff’s factual allegations as true. A complaint needs “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief” and sufficient “[f]actual allegations . . . to raise a right to

relief above the speculative level . . . .” Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (internal quotation marks omitted). A plaintiff’s basis for relief “requires more than labels and conclusions . . . .” Id. Therefore, a plaintiff must “allege facts sufficient to state all the elements of [the] claim.”<sup>1</sup> Bass v. E.I. Dupont de Nemours & Co., 324 F.3d 761, 765 (4th Cir. 2003).

To state a claim under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege “the violation of a right secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States, and must show that the alleged deprivation was committed by a person acting under color of state law.” West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988). However, the Jail is not a “person” for purposes of § 1983. See McCoy v. Chesapeake Corr. Ctr., 788 F. Supp. 890 (E.D. Va. Apr. 13, 1992) (reasoning jails are not appropriate defendants to a § 1983 action).

Plaintiff’s simple allegation against McPeak is that he refuses to allow Jail inmates to possess dental floss, which caused plaintiff cavities, pain, a lost tooth, and tooth decay. Plaintiff does not describe how a correctional policy to ban dental floss is unreasonably related to legitimate penological interests or constitutes a cruel and unusual living condition. See, e.g., Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 107 (1987); Rhodes v. Chapman, 452 U.S. 337 (1981). Plaintiff admits that he is permitted to brush his teeth three times a day, receives dental treatment, and is prescribed pain relievers, and he fails to show a sufficiently serious medical

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<sup>1</sup> Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief is “a context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009). Thus, a court screening a complaint under Rule 12(b)(6) can identify pleadings that are not entitled to an assumption of truth because they consist of no more than labels and conclusions. Id. Although the court liberally construes pro se complaints, Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972), the court does not act as an inmate’s advocate, sua sponte developing statutory and constitutional claims not clearly raised in a complaint. See Brock v. Carroll, 107 F.3d 241, 243 (4th Cir. 1997) (Luttig, J., concurring); Beaudett v. City of Hampton, 775 F.2d 1274, 1278 (4th Cir. 1985). See also Gordon v. Leeke, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978) (recognizing that a district court is not expected to assume the role of advocate for a pro se plaintiff).

need for dental floss. Accordingly, the court dismisses the Complaint without prejudice for failing to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1).

The Clerk is directed to send copies of this Memorandum Opinion and the accompanying Order to plaintiff.

ENTER: This 5<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2012.

*Michael F. Urbanski*

United States District Judge